

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /055 W

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R 200516Z MAR 75

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 6120

C O N F I D E N T I A L SYDNEY 0574

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJ: SNEDDEN-FRASER CONFRONTATION

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT N.S.W. LIBERAL PARTY JOHN ATWILL, HE INDICATED THAT WHEREAS A WEEK AGO SNEDDEN WAS IN A WEAK POSITION, HE HAS GAINED CONSIDERABLY IN RECENT DAYS AND HE ESTIMATES THE ODDS ON TOMORROW'S LIBERAL PARTY VOTE ABOUT 50-50. SNEDDEN'S POSITION HAS IMPROVED WITH THE DECLARATION OF SUPPORT BY SEVERAL LIBERAL FRONT-BENCH HEAVYWEIGHTS. ATWILL DISPUTES THE FRASER CAMP'S ESTIMATE REPORTED IN THE AUSTRALIAN TODAY, THAT FRASER WOULD GET 10 OF THE N.S.W. VOTES VERSUS FIVE FOR SNEDDEN. ATWILL GUESSES THE TRUE VOTING BY THE N.S.W. CONTINGENT MIGHT BE IN REVERSE WITH 10 GOING TO SNEDDEN. HE NAMED FIVE PROBABLES FOR FRASER. FIRST, WENTWORTH AND MC MAHON WHO HE THOUGHT WERE AUTOMATIC VOTES AGAINST SNEDDEN AND THEN CONNOLLY, RUDDOCK AND HOWARD WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS "YOUNG FELLAS". ATWILL SAYS THAT FRASER'S STRENGTH MAINLY RESTS ON YOUNG BACKBENCHERS WHO FIND IT FASHIONABLE TO TAKE CONSERVATIVE OR RIGHT-WING ATTITUDES, WHEREAS SNEDDEN'S SUPPORT IS FROM THE OLDER MORE SEASONED MEMBERS WHO RECOGNIZE THE DESIRABILITY OF A MORE PRAGMATIC MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD APPROACH.

2. REGARDLESS OF WHO WINS, ATWILL THINKS THE EFFECT OF THE CHALLENGE WILL BE DESTABLIZING ON THE LIBERAL PARTY WHICH SEEMS, HE SAID, TO BE DUPLICATING THE LABOR PARTY'S INTERNAL
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FACTIONALISM DURING ITS YEARS OUT OF POWER. HE BELIEVES,

HOWEVER, THAT A FRASER VICTORY WILL HAVE MORE SERIOUS DIVISIVE
EFFECTS THAN A SNEDDEN VICTORY.
HANNAH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL LEADERS, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SYDNEY00574
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750097-0784
From: SYDNEY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750330/aaaabaxg.tel
Line Count: 64
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <03 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SNEDDEN-FRASER CONFRONTATION
TAGS: PINT, AS, (SNEDDEN, BILLY), (FRASER)
To: CANBERRA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006